

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
17 February 1984

WAVERLY, IOWA
Iowa-Choice

American voters choose their leaders by deciding which candidate most closely mirrors their own personality, a study by a Wartburg College professor has found.

"If you feel the candidate has qualities you admire and like to see in yourself, you'll probabaly support him regardless of whether he is a Democrat or Republican," said Dan Thomas, an associate professor of political science.

In his study, Thomas said, he asked a group of voters to determine what their "ideal selves" were and then asked them to rate presidential candidates from the 1976 election.

He based his comparisons on a list of 50 words ranging from "old fashioned" to "shrewd." The voters first picked the words that applied to themselves then chose words that applied to Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter.

Results showed voter support went to the candidate with whom the voter felt a closer identification.

"The subjects decided how closely each of those adjectives described their ideal selves," he said. "Their ideal selves influenced their political support."

Thomas has authored a number of reports on political behavior and was once sought by the CIA to work up personality assessments of foreign leaders. He declined, saying he was reluctant to leave the academic world for the CIA.